

Dr. Glauber is a role model for young people all across this country. I hope that his extraordinary achievements and contributions will serve as an inspiration to students at all levels to pursue the study and career of science. As we honor Dr. Glauber and the other prize winners, it is critical that we also recognize our obligation to provide the next generation of Americans with the scientific and technological education that they need to succeed in today's global economy.

**RECOGNITION OF THE HEROIC JOB  
THAT WAS DONE BY THE U.S.  
COAST GUARD AT THE TIME OF  
HURRICANE KATRINA**

**HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 8, 2005*

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, we all witnessed the heroic job that was done by the U.S. Coast Guard at the time of Hurricane Katrina. It was widely noted in newspapers and on television that while other agencies of the Federal Government fell down on the job, the U.S. Coast Guard upheld the motto that has been its standard of performance since its creation in the 18th Century: *Semper Paratus*, Always Ready.

What is less well known is that the Coast Guard is unique among the armed services because it has, associated with it, a civilian support organization, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Since 1939, these volunteer life-savers have backed up the active duty Coast Guard by relieving the regulars of a number of tasks related to marine safety, search and rescue, and pollution monitoring and control. The 30,000 members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary serve as a force multiplier in these times of threats to our national security and their unpaid service enables the Coast Guard to fulfill its missions in this time of fiscal constraint.

I would like to call special attention to the work of the 14 active members of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 014-05-05 of Edison, New Jersey.

In the past year, these auxiliary members have conducted safety checks on 123 vessels, visited marine dealers and boatyards to distribute safety materials, conducted 3 dozen boating safety courses, and attended boat shows to stress to boat owners and prospective owners the importance of marine safety and the need to take safety courses to prevent accidents on the water. The Auxiliary helps

maintain aids to navigation and conducts patrols using their own vessels.

I ask my colleagues to recognize the contribution of Flotilla 014-05-05 of Edison, New Jersey to the mission of the U.S. Coast Guard.

**INTRODUCTION OF THE NURSING  
HOME FIRE SAFETY ACT**

**HON. JOHN B. LARSON**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 8, 2005*

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to join the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) in introducing the Nursing Home Fire Safety Act of 2005.

As millions of Americans visit their friends and family in nursing homes in this holiday season, they want to know that their loved ones are safe from the threat of fire. However, it would disturb many to learn that the Government Accountability Office estimates that 20 to 30 percent of the 17,000 nursing homes across the country still lack a full fire sprinkler system.

Unfortunately, families in my district have seen tragic results of a nursing home fire first hand. In February 2003 sixteen residents of a nursing home in Hartford were killed in one of the worst fires in the city's history. Another nursing home fire in Nashville, Tennessee later that year took the lives of fifteen people. In both cases these buildings were older facilities that had been allowed to operate without an automatic fire sprinkler system.

A July 2004 GAO report found that "the substantial loss of life in the Hartford and Nashville fires could have been reduced or eliminated by the presence of properly functioning automatic sprinkler systems," and that "federal oversight of nursing home compliance with fire safety standards is inadequate." And, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), there is no record of a multiple death fire in a nursing home equipped with an automatic fire sprinkler system.

It has been almost 2 years since the tragic fires of 2003, yet the federal government has taken only small steps to increase fire safety in nursing homes. To date the only concrete action the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has taken to improve fire safety is requiring nursing homes without a sprinkler system to install battery operated smoke detectors. While this is a good first step, the rule has been criticized by fire safety

advocates since the smoke detectors do not need to be hard wired to the building's alarm system or 9-1-1.

Experts agree that it's not a matter of "if" there will be another nursing home fire, but when and how bad. It should not take another tragedy to remind us how vulnerable our nursing homes are to fire.

According to the GAO and industry experts, the single biggest obstacle preventing most nursing homes from installing sprinklers is the cost. Already burdened by the increasing cost to care for their residents and shortfalls in the Medicare funding they rely on, they simply cannot afford these systems. In addition, while CMS has it within their authority to increase fire safety standards and mandate the installation of sprinklers, it has repeatedly shied away from doing so because of the cost that would be passed on to nursing homes.

That is why we are introducing this legislation today.

The Nursing Home Fire Safety Act of 2005 would provide low interest loans and need-based grants to nursing homes in the greatest need of assistance in tackling the high cost of installing sprinklers. The loan program would assist nursing homes that cannot afford the up-front cost of retrofitting their facilities, but could afford to pay back a low interest government backed loan. The grant program would target those nursing homes in the greatest need of financial assistance in installing sprinkler systems by requiring the Secretary of Health and Human Services to give priority to facilities that lack the resources to install these systems on their own. In addition, the bill expresses the sense of Congress that every nursing home in America should be equipped with full sprinkler systems within 5 years and that CMS should move quickly to adopt stronger fire safety standards.

Together, these provisions will ensure that nursing homes have access to the financial resources to overcome the cost of providing their residents with the fire safety protection they need.

The Hartford and Nashville fires demonstrated the terrible and unacceptable consequences of allowing cost to stand in the way of fire safety. Congress has ignored this problem for far too long and it is time for us to take action to ensure that our nation's most vulnerable are safe from the threat of fire.

Again, I thank Mr. KING for joining me in this important initiative, and urge our colleagues to join us in helping to make nursing homes in their districts—and around the country—safe from the threat of fire.